

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 19, 2010

Mr. Bob Pisano
Interim Chief Executive Officer
Motion Picture Association of America, Inc.
1600 Eye St., NW
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Mr. Pisano:

We recognize that a number of major studios have taken some steps to reduce smoking in youth-rated movies. We applaud those actions and encourage the entire motion picture industry to commit to adopt strong, enforceable steps to protect our children from the dangers of smoking.

Every day approximately 1,200 young people try smoking for the first time, and approximately 80 percent of smokers start smoking before the age of 18. Tobacco use causes approximately one-third of all cancers and 20 percent of coronary heart disease deaths. Preventing young people from ever picking up the smoking habit in the first place is critical to improving our nation's health.

Despite some progress to curtail tobacco advertising, we are troubled that tobacco advertising continues to target youth and display images that encourage young people to smoke.

In light of evidence linking smoking in movies to initiation of smoking by young people, both the U.S. based Smoke Free Movies Initiative and the World Health Organization (WHO) have recommended the following four measures to reduce youth exposure to images of smoking in movies.

- ***Require strong anti-tobacco spot announcements.*** Distributors and exhibitors should require an age-appropriate anti-tobacco message, vetted by a recognized health authority and not supplied by a tobacco company, to run before any film with tobacco imagery, in any distribution channel or medium, regardless of rating.
- ***Rating future motion pictures with tobacco imagery "R."*** The only exceptions should be when the presentation of tobacco clearly and unambiguously reflects the dangers and consequences of tobacco use or is necessary to represent the smoking of a real historical figure.
- ***Certify no payoffs.*** Producers should post an affidavit-backed certificate in the closing credits of any motion picture with tobacco imagery, declaring that no one

credited by the production was offered or accepted any consideration or service for including the tobacco imagery.

- ***Stop identifying tobacco brands.*** There should be no identifiable tobacco package, collateral or advertising imagery visible in any scene.

Thank you for your consideration of the recommendations proposed by the Smoke Free Movies initiative. We hope to work with you in the future on continuing to address the important concerns about smoking.

Additional information about the outlined measures to reduce youth exposure to smoking in movies is available in the WHO report, *Smoke Free Movies: From Evidence to Action* (http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2009/9789241597937_eng.pdf) and through the Smoke Free Movies initiative <http://smokefreemovies.ucsf.edu/solution/index.html>.

Sincerely,


Edward J. Markey


Joseph R. Pitts